

CRITICAL DIGEST

Vol. II No. 9

October 31, 1949

The Weekly That Keeps You Informed Of The Current Broadway Critical Scene

N.Y. New Shows This Week

Lost In The Stars-Music Box, 10/30/49. Andersen-Weill musical based on Alan Paton's novel, Cry the Beloved Country, opens without benefit of out of town tryout. Show played several paid preview benefits preceding opening in New York.

Regina-46th Street Theatre, 10/31/49. "Controversial" is the word used most often in the out of town reviews of the musical version of "The Little Foxes". The trade reviewers, the New Haven and Boston daily critics all agree it is a great piece of theatre, but they are a little skeptical as to how Broadway will receive it. Billboard's New Haven critic went right out on the limb. He called it "one of the real classics of the theatre", while Variety's New Haven critic thought the ingredients for a hit were there if the proper blending of elements was completed before opening on Broadway. Boston Globe's Cyrus Durgis recommends the show for the serious theatre goer, not the entertainment seeker. Boston Traveler's Helen Eager agreed. All Boston critics reported the enthusiasm of the local audience for the show. Boston American's Peggy Doyle just didn't like the show; she called it monotonous, arty and phony.

I Know My Love-Shubert, 11/2/49. Boston's daily critics raved about the Lunts, but split widely on the merits of the S.N. Behrman script. These views range from Boston Post's Elliot Norton's comment of "shrewdly wise and adroitly witty comedy" to Boston Herald's Elinor Hughes "short, light, amiable trifle...all ingredients of good theatre in production, only a substantial play seems to be lacking."

Love Me Long-48th Street Theatre, 11/4/49. Wilmington's daily and trade critic liked the Brock Pemberton comedy starring Shirley Booth, but Philadelphia's three daily critics panned the show. They placed most of the blame on author Doris Frankel for bad play writing. They also accused her of composing a confusing plot, writing unfunny comedy lines, and of miscasting the play. Even the direction by Pemberton and Margaret Perry came in for adverse criticism.

N.Y. Closings This Week

Twelfth Night-Empire, 10/3/49. The critics were split almost equally on the merits of the revival, but no one actually raved about the show. Cue's Gilbert Gabriel billed the show as "art's labors lost."

Magazine Reviews View the New Plays -- digests on inside pages.

Touch And Go-Broadhurst, 10/13/49. Daily Worker, Christian Sciences Monitor and George Jean Nathan added "pro" votes for the Abbott revue. But the Daily Worker voiced a mild complaint as the "obvious" political censorship which halts satire on the House Un-American Committee and other suitable targets.

Yes, M'Lord-Booth, 10/4/49. Nathan gave the English play a "so-so" review. He liked Matthews in the "typical English butler comedy."

N.Y.C. Criticism At A Glance -- See Page 882 -- Cumulative Index Issued Monthly.

Yes, M'Lord

a. Nathan-So-So: Typical English butler play whimsically presented. Matthews expert in pantomime, timing, under-emphasis, though he does slur end of sentences. Rest of the company is of varying quality.

b. Commonweal-Pro: Barring a couple of dull juveniles, the occasion is one for gratitude. Curzon is perfect, Matthews is Matthews.-Phelan.

Touch And Go

c. Daily Worker-Pro: Sprightly and harmless enough revue, because of Nancy Andrews and some fairly clever sketches, may rise to status of hit. Music is on pleasant side, but dances don't help much. Major complaint, with this as well as all current revues, is the obvious censorship of all political satire. No satire on House Un-American Committee, etc. has appeared since 'Call Me Mister'.-Rubin.

d. Christian Science Monitor-Pro: Usual, unoriginal revue well done. Succeeds in aim of precision, fluid drive and a kind of velvet sophistication. Several of sketches amply earn their way in laughs, others fall flat.-Beauford.

e. Nathan-Pro: Fast, sassy, funny show, welcome successor to 'Lend An Ear' that we have all been waiting for. Full review of show next week.

Twelfth Night

f. Saturday Review of Literature-Pro: There is little wrong and almost everything right about production. Direction is sprightly, swift moving and charming in touch and quality. Cast achieves welcome luster and vitality in playing. Must confess that no matter how well done, I found play hard to take across the footlights, but still enjoy reading it. Have seen and read it so many times the plot and jokes seem silly.-Brown.

g. Commonweal-Pro: Phelan didn't attend this show, gave his opening night tickets to "the most diffident and thoughtful editor I know." She reported "easy going all around, everyone has good time. Music disappointing. Moss elegant, Reid delightful, clowns honestly funny, the audience loved it."

Born Yesterday -- Revisited Three Years Later

h. Post-Pro: Base deception to say that cast is as soul satisfying as original. Play is now receiving an adequate stock company production, with a decided minimum of distinction. But this is what makes play still impressive, realize how much the writing counted. Fine, warm, wise generally beguiling comedy. Continues to be one of the outstanding comedies of the American theatre.-Watts

Capsule Critiques by N.Y.Sun's Hi Phillips

Detective Story	Death of a Plainclothes Man
Diamond Lil	West Pacific
Miss Liberty.	Oh, say can you see by the tune's early lilt?
Touch And Go.	Lend An Abbott
South Pacific	Ezio Does It

Browning Version-Coronet, 10/12/49 Pro: Times 890a, Tribune 890b, Mirror 890d, Compass 890e, Post 890f, Sun 890g, Telegram 890h, Journal American 890i, Eagle 890j, Newark News 890k, Women's Wear 890l, Morning Telegram 890m, Daily Worker 886a, Wall Street Journal 886b, Journal of Commerce 886c, Variety 886e, Billboard 886f, Newsweek 886h. Con: News 890c, Nathan 886d, New Yorker 886i, Time 886j, Cue 886k. So-So Christian Science Monitor 886g.

Touch And Go -Broadhurst, 10/13/49. Pro: Times 891a, News 891c, Post 891f, World Telegram 891i, Newark News 891k, Women's Wear Daily 891-l, Journal of Commerce 887d, Morning Telegram 887c, Newsweek 887h, Time 887i, New Yorker 887j, Cue 887l. Con: Tribune 891b, Mirror 891d, Sun 891g, Wall Street Journal 887c, Variety 887f, Billboard 887g. So-So Journal American 891h.

Yes, M'Lord-Booth, 10/4/49. Pro: Tribune 896g, News 896h, Compass 896j, Post 897a, Sun 897b, World Telegram 897d, Newark News 897f, Wall Street Journal 897g, Morning Telegram 897i, Journal of Commerce 897j, Billboard 893d, Christian Science Monitor 897g, Newsweek 893g, New Yorker 893i, New Republic 887a, Commonwealth 880b. Con: Times 896f, Mirror 896i, Journal American 897c, Daily Worker 893b, Cue 893e, Time 893h. So-So Eagle 897e, Women's Wear 897h, Variety 893c, Nathan 880e.

Closed Shows 1949-1950 Season

Gilbert & Sullivan Company-Hellinger, 10/4/49 - 10/22/49. 897k, 898a-k, 892i-l, 893a, 884a-l, 885a-m.

Twelfth Night-Empire, 10/3/49 - 10/29/49. 895a-k, 8962-e, 892a-h, 887l, 880f-g.

Shows of Past Seasons That Closed in 1949-1950

Anne of the Thousand Days - 12/8/48 - 10/8/49

Blackouts - 9/6/49 - 10/15/49

Checking the Theatre Ads -- Cartoon Division

Mary Gibson's cartoon in This Week sums up perfectly what Critical Digest objects to in misleading theatre ads. Her sketch shows a group of producers reading the reviews of their play. The burly man in the center says, "Now this review says 'It's the most extraordinary piece of claptrap ever produced.' Why don't we just quote 'extraordinary'?"

N.Y.C. Criticism At A Glance - Ratings of 30 Reviews.

A Streetcar Named Desire-Barrymore, 11/3/48. Pro: Times, Tribune, News, Mirror, PM, Post, Sun, Journal-American, World-Telegram, Brooklyn Eagle, Newark News, Women's Wear Daily, Wall Street Journal, Journal of Commerce, Morning Telegram, Variety, Billboard, Theatre Arts, Commonweal, SRL, Cue, Newsweek, Nation, New Republic, New Yorker. Con: Daily Worker, Catholic World, Christian Science Monitor. So-So: George Jean Nathan, Time.

As The Girls Go-Broadway, 11/14/48. Pro: 19 reviews. Con: Tribune, Star, Morning Telegram, Commonweal. So-So: News, World Telegram, Theatre Arts, Commonweal, Daily Worker, Christian Science Monitor. No review in Saturday Review.

Born Yesterday-Miller, 2/4/46. All 30 reviewers vote "Pro".

Death Of A Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 reviews. Con: Nation. So-So: Time.

Detective Story-Hudson, 3/23/49. Pro: 20 reviews. Unchecked reviews are Eagle, Newark News, Daily Worker, Nathan, Catholic World, Christian Science Monitor, Saturday Review, Nation, New Republic, Compass.

Diamond Lil-Plymouth, 3/23/49. 30 Reviews for Mac, 30 against her play.

Goodbye My Fancy-Beck, 11/17/48. Pro: 18 reviews. Con: World Telegram, Daily Worker, Wall Street Journal, Catholic World, Nation, New Republic. So-So: Nathan, Cue, SRL, Time. No review in Compass, Christian Science Monitor.

Kiss Me, Kate-Century, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 reviews. Con: New Republic. None in Nation.

Lend An Ear-Shubert, 12/16/48. Pro: 25 reviews. Con: Daily Worker, N.Y. Star, New Republic. So-So: Nation. None in SRL.

Miss Liberty-Imperial, 7/15/49. Pro: Mirror, Sun, Journal-American, Women's Wear Daily, Morning Telegram, Billboard. Con: Times, Tribune, Variety, Theatre Arts, Commonweal, Cue, SRL, Time, New Republic. So-So: News, Post, World-Telegram, Newsweek, Catholic World. Others unchecked.

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 23 reviews. Con: Christian Science Monitor. So-So: Daily Worker, Nathan, Morning Telegram. No review in Catholic World, Nation.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: Times, Tribune, News, Mirror, Post, Sun, Journal American, World Telegram, Women's Wear Daily, Journal of Commerce, Morning Telegram, Variety, Billboard, Theatre Arts, Christian Science Monitor, SRL, Newsweek, New Yorker. So-So: Cue, Time. Others unchecked.

The Madwoman of Chaillot-Royale, 12/28/48. Pro: 20 reviews. Con: Mirror, Star, Post, Sun, Journal-American, Journal of Commerce, Nation, Billboard, Nation. So-So: World Telegram, Eagle.

Where's Charley-St. James, 10/11/48. Pro: 16 reviews. Con: Post, Sun, Women's Wear, Daily Worker, Billboard, Commonweal, Christian Science Monitor, SRL, Newsweek. So-So: Mirror, Time. None in Nation. Eagle unchecked.

NOTE: Reviewers are rated as to how they like the show, not if they think it will be a hit. "Pro" means the reviewer recommends the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening. "Con" means he doesn't recommend it as such. "So-So" means the reviewer didn't state his preference directly.

